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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000803

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#) [MDC](#)
SUBJECT: DAY ONE OF STAY-AWAY

REF: HARARE 788

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i, Eric T. Schultz under Section 1.
4 b/d

Summary

1. (C) June 9, day one of the Broad Alliance-led two-day stay-away, appeared to be a partial success. The greatest impact was in Harare where Embassy staff observed slightly reduced vehicular traffic and significantly reduced pedestrian traffic. Some businesses reported that the majority of their staff reported for work while others had nearly no staff. Police presence was visible but not intrusive throughout the day in major cities. Civil society and the MDC reported that based on today's response, they were going forward with follow up demonstrations for next week. End Summary.

The Stay Away in Harare

2. (C) By mid-day June 9, it appeared that many individuals in Harare had heeded the call to stay home, although most businesses stayed open. In the morning, Embassy staff observed only slightly less vehicular traffic than normal but noticed that there were fewer commercial mini-buses and fewer people in each vehicle than usual. Pedestrian traffic was significantly reduced. There were also far fewer individuals hailing rides or gathering at bus stops. Noticeably absent were students who are normally seen in groups walking to school. Schools were open, but Embassy locally employed staff said many teachers yesterday invited students to stay home.

3. (C) Many businesses that we contacted were fully staffed while others had nearly no staff, reflecting the initial mixed success of the stay away. The Managing Director of Dimension Data in Harare reported that only one of his staff showed up for work. He predicted that many businesses would close early. Tham Mapofu of 3M Corporation said only 50% of his staff came in, mostly factory workers.

4. (C) Police presence in Harare was heightened throughout the morning but, with few exceptions, generally not obtrusive. Embassy staff reported sightings of a cannon and a tank being transported through the city, but there was otherwise there was no heightened military presence. Embassy staff reported increased activity at roadblocks from the high-density suburb of Chitungwiza into Harare. The police were requiring individuals to disembark from buses and individually questioning them about their business in town and sometimes asking for receipts for any goods in the individual's possession.

Response in Other Major Cities

5. (C) Businessmen whom we contacted in Mutare and Bulawayo reported that workers were going to work and there were no disturbances. They said there was heightened police presence and police, and in Bulawayo the police were breaking up groups of people in public.

Civil Society and MDC Assessments

6. (C) NCA Chairperson Lovemore Madhuku, who led the Broad Alliance effort in organizing the stay-away, by mid-afternoon called the first day a success. He told polooff that more than half of workers had stayed home. He said that the stay-away would probably roll over the weekend into next week, depending on what happened on Friday. Broad Alliance leaders were planning more active protests for next week. He said that the people needed heroes to set a good example and

his goal was to get 2,000 people in the streets. He added that organizing even today,s stay-away was consuming a great deal of resources, primarily for fuel, as organizers moved around to get the word out and monitor the situation.

17. (C) As part of the stay-away, MDC MPs did not attend the opening session of Parliament (septel). The MDC conducted no public activities. However, the MDC had supported the stay away and our MDC contacts reported that the stay-away was very successful in the high-density suburbs, in large part because MP Job Sikhala was active in spreading the word. This success was in spite of a heavy police presence. In Chitungwiza, for instance, MDC contacts reported that police were present in much greater numbers than usual and moving around and that the military were also visible. However, neither was reported going into homes or questioning people.

18. (C) Raymond Majongwe of Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe said the stay-away had been successful but said further action was needed and that there would be no impact if some of the MDC,s and civil society,s leadership were not arrested to call attention to the situation and show that Zimbabweans were not being passive.

Comment

19. (C) As of mid-afternoon June 9, the stay-away appeared to be at least a partial success. A lack of transportation appeared to be an important factor, probably reflecting the fact that private commuter buses were among the first targets of Operation Restore Order. The GOZ response has been relatively moderate, which may encourage greater participation on June 10. So too might the fact that June 10 is a Friday. It remains to be seen if the Broad Alliance can muster enough support for more active demonstrations next week given the public,s fear and apathy. The last few NCA demonstrations had relatively low turnout and quickly dispersed.

110. (C) For its part, the MDC, which reluctantly supported the stay away, continues to be criticized for not being aggressive enough. The independent media are increasingly taking the MDC leadership to task for failing to lead. A cartoon in today,s Financial Gazette, depicting the MDC as an empty suit, is indicative. Efforts to organize action next week may fail to reach critical mass or be crushed, but failure to act at all, especially by the MDC, may pose more significant long-term risks for Zimbabwe's challenged opposition and civil society.
SCHULTZ